

"NATINMED HAVER, LONDON."

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE

FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH,

HAMPSTEAD,

LONDON, N.W. 3.

PRIVY COUNCIL

July 27th 1939.

My dear Michael.

I am very sorry to say that I have had to abandon my trip to America, to attend the Congress in September. I am very disappointed, especially as I have my paper ready, sent in my abstract, and saved up £60 for the holiday. The explanation, of course, is the international situation. Like everybody else, I have been hoping, week by week, that the situation would improve but, instead of that, it has got steadily worse; and we have now got the Japanese problem - a far more serious business than most people in England realise - to add to the European one. We all hope, of course, that there will be no war, but its imminence has been very near more than once; and we simply do not know what may happen over a week-end - the usual time for our politicians to take a holiday and the Axis leaders to do things! Actually, if only my personal affairs and interests were concerned I should be inclined to make it.

Any reply to this letter should be addressed to:

THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL STANDARDS,

National Institute for Medical Research, Hampstead, London, N.W. 3.

make the trip. My family will be far away in the country, and safe, I hope, - if trouble came. But that is not all: I have been doing nothing else for nearly two years except defence work - actually, I can tell you, what I can't tell anybody else, what that is viz I have had to see to the provision of laboratories and gas gauging apparatus which would be required in case of war. This has been no small affair and we are not quite through with the ~~job~~ job yet, but getting on: we have produced all we think we shall require in our own laboratories so far, but the demands keep going up and it seems to be a never-ending business. Further, I have been told by the Government that, as I am a "key" man, - true enough, as only myself could take the proper action quickly enough if war came - I am to stay here at home and not go to USA. So that has settled my longed-for visit to you. It might have been possible to forget, for a while, all these troublesome things. This continued state of tension is, I suppose, a few degrees better than actual war, but it is really rather dreadful. One's lawful - and peaceful - occupation is gone, and I live in the daily stress of preparing for war; there is no respite. I see little of my family, and my holiday this year will be a few week ends at our Cotswold cottage. It is a ghastly business. Munich, which meant shame and humiliation for us, had to be simply because we were unarmed and, militarily, weak. We had disarmed to an extent which nobody realised, and few were aware of, and France was almost equally unprepared. Some day we may know exactly what happened at Munich - Chamberlain and Daladier must know - but very few thinking people believed that "appeasement" of that kind would lead to anything else but further and increased demands. And that is precisely what has happened.

MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL.

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There has been a tremendous change since Munich in the sense that we are no longer defenceless. In fact, it is probably true that, whereas in September last we could have been attacked and might have been defeated, we are now so strongly defended - especially London - that it is likely that the blow will not fall on us: it would cost the attacking force too much in men and material. But that is not the case elsewhere, and our guarantees and commitments mean that if the blow falls on Poland ^{or Rumania} we have no option: we shall be in it somewhere. So our preparations have to go on. Surely, there never was such madness in a world before! None of the common people of any country want war, and know that war need not come; and yet a few wild men can plunge the whole world into war. Whether war comes or not I cannot myself see how economic collapse can be avoided: this is perhaps least true of England which has great wealth and economic stability. But ~~now~~ many other European nations are now organised for war and nothing else, and that is the sad state.

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The Axis powers may prefer war - which they think they might win - to economic collapse which would mean the end of the regime anyhow. We are a very united people, but feebly led: we want a Roosevelt badly, a man with vision, courage and strength. You are greatly blessed in your President - at least, that is what we think over here.

I hope your Congress will be the great success it deserves to be as a reward for all the hard work you have put into it. I hope you will not have a great many defections although I know a few intending English delegates are situated as I am. But I think most of the English who intended to come, will come. The programme is a most interesting one and I am grieved that I shall not be able to have all the good talks with my good American friends that I had promised myself.

I hope you are all well. Mrs. Stanley is well in body, but grieved in mind and spirit at the state of the world today. We try to maintain a calm and cheerful atmosphere in the home for the sake of the children, but it is not easy. Last September, for example, Elizabeth's school was moved, at a few hours notice, to London, and this had an upsetting effect on her at the time but she has recovered her equanimity. Philippa is blossoming as ever and she goes to Elizabeth's school in September. We hope Charles is enjoying life at Harvard and doing well - it goes without saying of course that he will.

With kind regards to all of you from all of us here.

Yours ever

Percival.

P.S. Thanks so much for the books. I thoroughly enjoyed 'Doctors in Horseback' and the thriller as well (a body falls down stairs). I kept 'Gone with the Wind' at the Cottage and read it over again when I have finished it! It was so kind to send them to me.